

The Honorable Frederic Block
United States District Judge
Eastern District of New York
225 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, NY 11201

To The Honorable Judge Block,

I am writing on behalf of John Simonlacaj and his current legal situation. I will share the true character of John in this letter and whole-heartedly request he not be judged solely based on conduct, but rather that leniency be granted for him. John's life and his presence in the lives of others offers the greatest gifts that money cannot buy. All who know John, gain a support system that is loyal, trustworthy, and thoughtful. For me personally, he is a pillar of strength. He is a "stand-up guy" who puts the love of his family and friends first. He will always be there for you and you can always count on him to lift you up on your darkest days. He just has that light within him and when you see it, you realize you are blessed to know this incredible human being that gives more than he receives.

I am Bridget Jankovic, mom of three boys of the ages sixteen, eleven, and nine. I am a vice-principal for an Elementary School in Westchester, NY. I have known John for twenty years. I married John's cousin, Lou Jankovic twenty years ago in January 2000. Being that I was a complete outsider of the family and got married into it, I had to gather my own incites on John throughout the years, witnessing firsthand who John really is and deciding if I wanted any part of knowing him. I learned very quickly that on the outside, he can appear so serious, but when you really get to know him, he is one of the most loving people you will ever meet. In fact, deep down, he is a Teddy Bear! (I don't think I have ever shared that with him, but it's the truth.) He brings this type of comfort and security when he is around.

Unfortunately, In the last two years, my husband and I have had our share of life's turbulence. We come to find out that our [REDACTED] had a brain tumor. Suddenly, you feel your life spinning around you. My husband and I never felt more alone or afraid. We seriously had two things to hold on to during this time. Our faith in God and the support of John.

John was our comfort and security. John would come to the hospital everyday and spend hours just sitting by our side. Anyone who really knows John, also knows he comes from a dedicated and religious family. He is a man of faith. He gave us the spiritual support we needed and sent love and daily prayers our way. He always kept a positive mindset and would encourage us to be strong and that everything was going to be ok. This is John on the outside; however, I know from his wife, that he thought about us every day and could think of nothing else. That he wished he could do more for us. She told me he would go to church, light candles, and pray the rosary. She shared that she would see him cry for us and that he truly felt the heartbreak of this journey alongside us. John's heart is huge and generous. He is a kind human being with compassion for others.

John would come back every morning and night to be there for our family. This would include his wife and children who have the same generous and thoughtful values. I will never forget, as our [REDACTED]

was having brain surgery, John took my husband out to eat at a nearby restaurant. My husband had not eaten in what felt like days due to stress. I called to tell them the doctor had completed the surgery and that he was coming to discuss how it all went. My husband explained to me, that all he remembers is running out of the restaurant and leaving John there. He told me as he ran to get back into the hospital, it was raining down on him. He kept hitting the elevator button to rush up, jumped on and ran up to our hospital room. My husband describes it as the longest run ever of his life.

He arrived at the hospital room, and I see him and John running in, all wet from the rain. John was right behind him. The doctor said that the surgery went great, the tumor was successfully removed, and believes our [REDACTED] will be fine.

It is in your darkest life moments, that you look around and see who was there for you. As my husband ran out of that restaurant, John's instincts were to run with my husband and be along side him. As my husband ran in the elevator, John's quiet anchor of love was riding up along side my husband's most frightening life moment. When my husband, ran into the hospital room to hear the news, John was there, all wet from the rain. In fact, I remember hugging John first even before my husband. I often ask myself why I did that. I did that because as a wife, John helped me give the man I most love the support he needed, and I will forever appreciate the pain he removed from our hearts, just by being present.

I am so thankful and blessed that John is in our lives. I wish I could say we have John to ourselves, but we share him with so many people who have shared in the unselfishness of John. He will be there for you when it matters the most. This is who John is and will always be. He is a loyal person who makes a difference in the lives of those around him. In fact, so many of us, count on him to help carry us through our toughest times. We count on him to be our pillar of strength. I only pray that he is given the same light that he puts out into the world. I ask for leniency and know deep, DEEP in my heart and soul that such a decision will not be regretted.

Respectfully,

Bridget Jankovic
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